SIX LETTERS

OF THE LATE

Rev. JOHN FLETCHER,

Vicar of *Madely*, in *Shropshire*.

I will sing of the mercies of the LORD *forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.* Psalm 89. 1.

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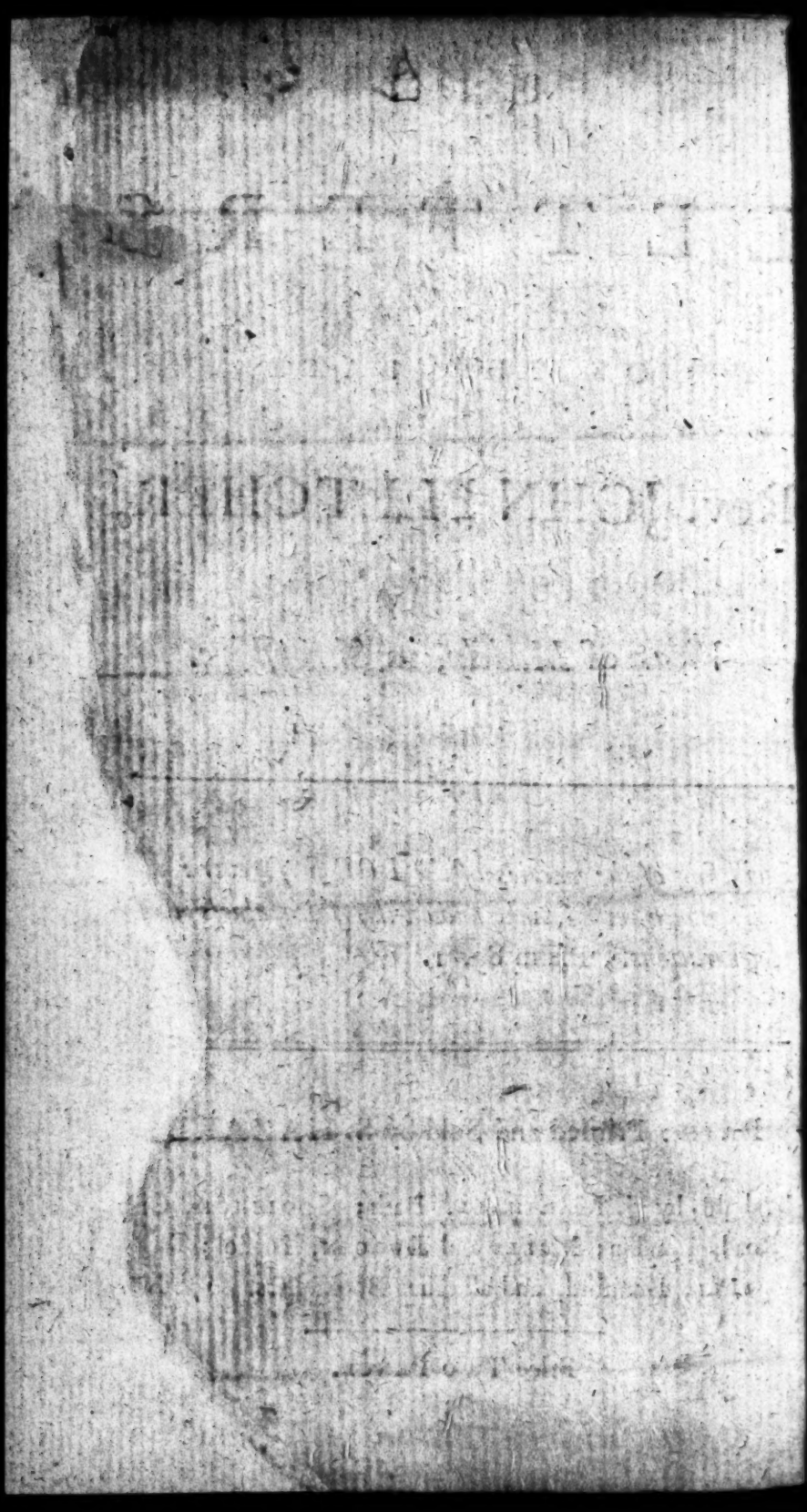

Advertiſement.

AS an addition to the pleaſure the pious reader may receive from the peruſal of theſe valuable letters, he is informed, that the money ariſing from the ſale of them, will be applied towards the relief of a poor aged man, of reſpectable character, whom diſorders of a very peculiar nature have rendered incapable of ſupporting himſelf, and who having no property of his own, has nothing to depend upon for a ſupply of his neceſſities, but the bounty of thoſe whom a gracious providence has bleſſed with a heart to compaſſionate, and an ability to relieve the diſtreſſes of their fellow creatures.

BATH, *January* 7, 1788.

Entered at Stationer's-Hall.

LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

*To J——s I——d, Esq;**

— July, 1776.

My very dear friend,

YOUR abſence made me poſtpone thanking you for all the love and kindneſs you ſhewed me, when at Briſtol. And to lay me under ſtill greater obligations, you have ſent me an hamper full of wine and broad cloth; as if it was not enough to adorn and cover the outſide: but you muſt alſo warm and nouriſh the inſide of the body. To this you have added a kind but melancholy letter from Dover—melancholy, I ſay, as well as kind—by the account of the worldlineſs of our poor proteſtant brethren abroad, and the little hopes you have of ſeeing your daughter again. My reaſon for not anſwering immediately was the hope of ſending by ſome friends, going to

* Of B—, near Briſtol, a gentleman of diſtinguiſhed piety; and Mr. *Fletcher's* moſt faithful and affectionate friend.

Briſtol. And, now, I have the opportunity of telling you, without further delay that, you ſhould have a little mercy upon your friends in not loading them with ſuch burdens of *beneficence*. How would you like to be loaded with kindneſſes you could not return? Were it not for a little of that *grace* which makes us not only willing, but happy to be *nothing* to be obliged and dependent; your *preſent* would make me quite miſerable: But the *mountains* of *divine mercy*, which preſs down my ſoul, have inured me to bear the *hills* of *brotherly kindneſs*.——I ſubmit to be cloathed and nouriſhed by you, as your ſervant, without having the happineſs of ſerving you.—To yield to this, is as hard in friendſhip, as to ſubmit to be ſaved by free grace; without one ſcrap of our own righteouſneſs. However, we are allowed both in religion and friendſhip, to eaſe ourſelves by thanks and prayers; till we have an opportunity of doing it by actions. I thank you then, my dear friend, and pray to GOD that you may receive his benefits: as I do yours. Your broad cloth can lap me round two or three times; but the mantle of divine love; the precious fine robe of Jeſus' righteouſneſs can cover your ſoul a *thouſand* times. The cloth, fine and good as it is, will not keep out a hard ſhower; but that garment of ſalvation will keep out even a ſhower of *fire* and *brimſtone*. Your cloth will wear out; but that fine cloth, the righteouſneſs of the ſaints will appear with a finer luſtre the more it is worn. The moth may fret your preſent, or the taylor ſpoil it in cutting; but the *preſent* which JESUS hath made you is out of the reach of the ſpoiler, and ready for preſent wear. Nor is there any fear of cutting it out wrong for it is ſeamleſs, wove from the top throughout with the white unbroken *warp* of *thirty-three years perfect obedience*, and the *red woof* of his *agony* and *ſuffering* even unto *death*. Now,

my

my dear friend, let me *beseech* you to accept of this heavenly present, as I accept of your earthly one. I did not send you one farthing to purchase it: it came unsought, unasked, unexpected as the *seed of the woman*: and it came just as I was sending the taylor to buy me some cloth for a coat. Immediately I stopt him, and when you next see me, it will be in the present. Now let JESUS see you in *his*, walk in white, adorn his gospel, while he beautifies you with the garment of salvation. Accept it freely, wear no more the old rusty coat of nature, and self-righteousness; send no more to have it patched, make your boast of an unbought suit, and love to wear the livery of JESUS. You will then love to do his work, it will be your meat and drink to do it. And that you may be vigorous in doing it, as I shall take a little of the wine for my stomach's sake, take you a good viral of the *wine of the kingdom* for your soul's sake. Every promise of the gospel is a bottle, a cask that has a spring within, and can never be drawn out. But draw the cork of *unbelief and drink abundantly*, O beloved! nor be afraid of intoxication, and if an inflammation follows, it will be only that of *love*. I beg you will be more free with the heavenly *vine* than I have been with that of the earthly one you have sent me. I have not tasted it yet. But whose fault is it? Not yours, certainly, but mine. If you do not drink daily spiritual health and vigour out of the cup of salvation, whose fault is it? Not JESUS', but yours. As he gives you his *righteousness* to cover your nakedness; and the consolations of his *spirit* to cheer and invigorate your soul, accept and use; wear, drink, and *live* to GOD. That you may heartily and constantly do this is my sincere prayer for you and yours: especially your poor daughter,*

* The young lady to whom the two succeeding letters were addressed, and who was at this time in a deep consumption.

whom I truſt, you have reſigned into the hands o
him, to whom ſhe is nearer than to you. The wiſe di
poſer of all things knows what is beſt for her. *Th*
hairs of her head, much more the days of her lif
are all numbered. The LORD often deſtroys the bod
that the ſoul may be ſaved. And if this is the ca
here, as we may reaſonably hope, you will not ſa
unto the LORD, what doſt thou? But ſay with th
father who loſt *two* ſons in one day, *It is the* LOR
let him do whatſoever he pleaſeth.* Or with him wh
loſt *ten* children at one ſtroke. *The Lord gave, an*
the Lord taketh away, bleſſed be the name of th
Lord.‡

Adieu,

JOHN FLETCHER.

* 1 Samuel, 3, 18. ‡ Job 1, 21.

LETTER II.

*To Miſs I———d, at Montpelier.**

My very dear friend,

THE poor account that your father hath brough
us of your health: and his apprehenſions o
not ſeeing you any more, before that *ſolemn da*
when all *people, nations, and tongues, ſhall ſtand to*
gether at the bar of GOD, make me venture, toge
ther with my love to you, to ſend you a few line
and my earneſt prayer to GOD is that they may b
bleſſed to your ſoul!

Fi

* A town in the ſouth of France, much frequented, o
account of the delightfulneſs of its ſituation, and great ſe
renity of air, by perſons of tender or broken conſtitutions

Firſt then, my dear friend, let me *beſeech* you not to flatter yourſelf with the hopes of living long here on earth, theſe hopes fill us with worldly thoughts, and make us backward to prepare for our change. I would not for the world entertain ſuch thoughts about myſelf. I have now in my pariſh a young man, who has been theſe two years under the ſurgeon's hands. Since they have given him up, which was about two months ago, he hath fled to the Lord; and found in him that ſaving health which ſurpaſſeth a thouſand times *that* the ſurgeons flattered him with; and he longs *to depart and to be with Chriſt, which is far better.* To ſee the bridge of life cut off behind us, and to have done with all thoughts of repairing it to go back into the world, hath a natural tendency to make us venture forward to the foot of the croſs. Secondly, conſider, my dear, how good the Lord is, to call you, to be tranſplanted into a better world, before you have taken deeper root in this ſinful world; and if it is hard to nature to die now, how much harder do you think it would be, if you lived to be mother of a family, and to cleave to earth by the ties of many new relations, ſchemes of gain, or proſpects of happineſs. Thirdly, reflect that by your illneſs, the Lord, who forecaſts for us, intimates long life would not have been for his glory, nor to your happineſs; from my ſoul, I believe, he takes many young people from the evil to come, out of the way of thoſe misfortunes, or temptations that would have made them miſerable in time and in eternity. Fourthly, your earthly father loves you much, witneſs the hundred miles he has gone for the bare proſpect of your health; but your heavenly father loves you a thouſand times better, and he is all wiſdom as well as all goodneſs. Allow then ſuch a gracious, loving father to chuſe for you, and if he chuſes death, acquieſe, and ſay, as you can, *good is the will of*

the Lord, his will muſt be beſt. Fifthly, weigh the ſinfulneſs of ſin, both original and actual, and firmly believe, the *wages of ſin is death*; this will make you patiently accept the puniſhment; eſpecially if you conſider that JESUS CHRIST by dying for us, hath taken away the *ſting* of death, and turned the *grave* into a paſſage to a bleſſed eternity. Sixthly, O! my dear, try to get nearer to the dear *Redeemer*, He hath delivered us *from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us.** He hath quenched the wrath of GOD in his atoning blood—by his atoning blood, by his harmleſs life and painful death, he hath ſatisfied all the demands of the law and juſtice of GOD; by his reſurrection he hath aſſerted the full diſcharge of all our ſpiritual debts; by his aſcenſion into heaven, where he is gone to prepare us a place, he hath opened a way to endleſs glory; by his powerful interceſſion, and the merits of his blood, which he pleads continually for us, he keeps that way open; and to encourage us he aſſures us, *he is the way, the truth, and the life; and that he who cometh to him he will in no-wiſe caſt out.* He mildly offers reſt to the heavy laden, pardon to the guilty, ſtrength to the feeble, and life to the dead. You know his words, "*I am the reſurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in me ſhall never* DIE." Seventhly, when you have conſidered your loſt eſtate as a ſinner by nature; together with the greatneſs, the fulneſs, the freeneſs, and ſuitableneſs of Chriſt's ſalvation; and when you have diligently viewed the glories, and charms of his perſon, BELIEVE in him without any ceremony; chooſe him for your *phyſician*, your *huſband*, and your *king*, be not afraid to venture upon and truſt in him, caſt yourſelf upon him in frequent acts of reliance, and ſtay your ſoul on him by means of his promiſes.

Pray

* Galatians 3. 13.

Pray much for *faith*, and be not afraid of accepting, using, and thanking GOD for a little. *The ſmoaking flax will he not quench*, only pray hard that he would blow it up into a light of blaze and love. Eighthly, BEWARE of impatience, repining, and peeviſhneſs, the ſins of ſick people; be gentle, eaſy to be pleaſed, reſigned as the bleeding LAMB of GOD. Wrong tempers indulged grieve, if they do not wound, the Spirit. Ninthly, do not repine at your being in a ſtrange country, far from your friends, and if your going to France does not anſwer the end propoſed as to your body, it will anſwer a ſpiritual end as to your ſoul. GOD ſuffers the broken reeds of your acquaintance to be out of your reach, that you may not catch at them, and that you may at once caſt your loneſome ſoul on the boſom of HIM, who fills heaven and earth. Tenthly, in praying, reading, hearing any read, and meditating, do not conſult feeble, fainting fleſh and blood; for at this rate death might find you idle and ſupine, inſtead of ſtriving to enter into the *ſtraight gate*, and when your ſpirits and vigour fail, remember, that *the Lord is the ſtrength of your life, and your portion forever. O death! where is thy ſting? thanks be to* GOD *who giveth us the victory through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Many pray hard that you may quit yourſelf living, or dying, in eaſe or pain, as a wiſe virgin; and as a good ſoldier of Chriſt; but above all JESUS, the captain and high prieſt of your profeſſion, intercedes mightily for you; *look to him and be ſaved*, even from the ends of France. To his pity, love, and power I recommend you, may he bleſs you, my dear friend, liſt up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace, and courage, repentance, faith, hope, and patient love both now and evermore, and am,

Your affectionate and ſincere friend and
ſervant in Jeſus,

JOHN FLETCHER.

LETTER III.

To the ſame.

December 5, 1768.

My dear afflicted friend,

I HEAR you are returned home from the laſt journey you took in queſt of bodily health. Your heavenly father ſees fit to deny you, not becauſe he hates you, *for whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth*, but becauſe health and life might be fatal ſnares to your ſoul, out of which you could not eſcape but by tedious illneſs, and an early death. Who knows, alſo, whether by all that you have ſuffered, and ſtill do ſuffer, our gracious Lord, does not intend to kill you to the fleſh and the world, and both to you. Beſides our hearts are ſo ſtupid, and our inſenſibility ſo great, that the father of our ſpirits ſees it neceſſary to put ſome of his ſharpeſt, longeſt thorns into our fleſh; to make us go to our dear JESUS, for the balmy graces of his Spirit. I believe ſome are drove out of all refuges of crafty and indolent nature, *only* by the neareſt and laſt approaches of that faithful miniſter and ſervant of Chriſt, *death*. Of this I had a remarkable inſtance no later than laſt Monday; when GOD took to himſelf one of my poor afflicted pariſhioners, a boy, fifteen years of age; who was turned out of the infirmary two years ago as incurable. From that time he grew weaker every day, by the running of a wound; but his poor ſoul did not gather ſtrength. In many reſpects one would have thought his afflictions were

loſt

loſt upon him. He ſeemed to reſt in his ſufferings and his patience under them, more than in the *Saviour's blood and righteouſneſs*. Being worn to a ſkeleton, he took to his death-bed. There I found him the week before laſt, with his candle burning in the ſocket, and no *oil* ſeemingly in his *veſſel*. I ſpent an hour in ſetting before him the greatneſs of his guilt, in this reſpect, that he had been ſo long under the rod of GOD, and had not yet been whipt out of his careleſs unbelief to the boſom of JESUS CHRIST. He fell under conviction: confeſt that particular guilt, and began to call on the LORD, with all the earneſtneſs his dying frame did allow. This was on the Wedneſday, the next Wedneſday the GOD *who delivers thoſe that are appointed to die*, ſet one of his feet upon the *rock*, and the next Sunday, the day before he died, *the other*. He had chiefly plyed that ſhort petition of the Lord's prayer, *thy kingdom come*; and he ſpent his laſt hours in teſtifying, as his ſtrength would allow, that the *kingdom* was come, and he was going to the KING; to whom he invited his joyful, mournful mother, to make the beſt of her way after him. Five or ſix days before, my wicked unbelieving heart might have ſaid, to what purpoſe hath GOD afflicted ſo long, and ſo heavily, this poor young worm. But the end ſhewed that he had all that while drove the ſpear of conſideration and conviction, till at laſt it touched him on the ſenſible part, and made him cry to his Saviour in earneſt. And who ever called upon him in vain? No one, not even that poor indolent collier boy, who for two years would not ſo much as croſs the way to hear me preach. Yet, how good was the Lord! becauſe his body was too weak to bear any terrors in his mind, he ſhewed him mercy without. The moment I heard him pray, and ſaw him *feel* after a Saviour, my fears on his account vaniſhed; and though he would not have been ſuf-

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fered to teſtify clearly the coming of GOD's kingdom, yet I would have had a joyful hope, that GOD had taken him up to it. Like this poor youth and myſelf, you have but one enemy, my dear friend, an indolent unbelieving heart: but the Lord hath drove it to a corner to make it cry to him, who hath been waiting at the door all theſe years of trouble, to bring you pardon, peace, and eternal life, in the pangs of bodily death. JESUS is his name, SALVATION and LOVE are his nature. He is the FATHER OF ETERNITY, *your* father of courſe. All the love that is in Mr. I—d's breaſt is nothing to the *abyſs* of love which is in your CREATOR's heart. *A mother may forget her ſucking child*, but *I will not forget thee*, ſays he, to every poor, diſtreſſed ſoul that claims his help. O fear not, my friend, to ſay, *I will ariſe and go to this father, though I have ſinned*, greatly ſinned *againſt heaven and in his ſight*. Lo! he riſes, he runs to meet you—to embrace you. He hath already met you in the *virgin's womb*; then he did ſo cleave to your fleſh and ſpirit, that he aſſumed both, and wears them as a pledge of his love to you. Claim in return, claim, as you can, this blood and ſpirit; both are now the property of every dying ſinner, that is not above receiving by *faith* the unſpeakable gift. Your father croſſed the ſea for you. JESUS hath done more; he hath croſſed the *abyſs* that lies between heaven and earth—between the CREATOR and the creature. He hath waded through the *ſea* of his *tears*, *blood*, *agonies*, not to take you to the phyſician at Montpelier*, but to become your own *phyſician* and *ſaviour* himſelf. To ſupport you under all your bodily tortures, ſanctify all your extremities, and to heal your ſoul—your ſoul by his multiplied ſtripes! Your father hath ſpared no expence to reſtore you to health, but JESUS, who wants you in your

* The place before deſcribed.

your prime, hath ſpared no blood in his veins to waſh you from your ſins, write your pardon, and ſeal your title to glory. O my friend, delay not to ſurrender yourſelf chearfully to this *good ſhepherd*. He will lay you gladly on the arm of his power, torn as you are with the briers of ſin and diſeaſe, and will carry you triumphantly to his heavenly ſheepfold. Look not at your *emptineſs*, but caſt it into his *fulneſs*, as a veſſel into the ſea. Look not at your *ſins*, without beholding his *blood* and *righteouſneſs*. Eye not *death*, but to behold through that black door your glorious SAVIOUR ſaying, *fear not, O thou of little faith, why doſt thou doubt? I am the reſurrection and the life.* Conſider not eternity but as the *palace* where you are going to enter with the *bridegroom of ſouls*, and reſt from all your ſins and miſeries. View not the condemning law of GOD but as made honourable by him, *who was a curſe for you*, and bore the malediction of the law by hanging, bleeding, and dying on the curſed tree in your place. If you think of hell, let it be to put you in mind to believe that the *blood of* GOD INCARNATE hath quenched its devouring flame. If you have no comfort, miſtruſt not JESUS on that account; on the contrary, take advantage from it to give greater glory to GOD, by believing, as Abraham, *in hope againſt hope*. And let this be your greateſt, your only comfort that JESUS, who had *all* faith and patience, cryed out for *you*, in his dying moments, *my* GOD! *my* GOD! *why haſt thou forſaken me?* Only as your ſtrength exerted and his grace apprehended will allow, ſurrender yourſelf conſtantly to him, as the purchaſe of his blood, and invite him earneſtly to you as a poor worm periſhing without him. In this ſimple *goſpel way* wait the Lord's leiſure, and he will comfort your heart; he will make all his goodneſs to paſs before you here, or take you hence to ſhew you, what poſſibly you could not bear

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in flesh and blood, the *direct* beams of the uncreated beauty of your heavenly *spouse*. I hope you take care to have little or nothing else mentioned to and about you, but *his* praises and promises. Your tongue and ears are going to be silent in the grave, now or never use them to hear, and speak good of his name. Comfort your weeping friends; exhort those who are careless; reprove the backsliders; encourage seekers; water, and you shall be watered again. Deathupon you makes you, through CHRIST, a mother in Israel. Arise as *Deborah*, remember the praying, believing, though dying thief; and be not afraid to drop a word for him, who opened a fountain of *blood* for you in his *dying, tortured body*. SUFFER, LIVE, DIE at his *feet* and you'll soon *revive, sing*, and *reign*, in his *bosom* FOREVERMORE.—Farewell in the *conqueror* of death and *prince* of life.

JOHN FLETCHER.

N. B. This amiable young lady (of whom the editor would most gladly have given the pious reader some further account, if he could have obtained it) shortly after the receipt of this letter, sweetly and most joyfully fell asleep in JESUS, in the 17th or 18th year of her age.

LET.

LETTER IV.

To a Friend in Dublin.

MADELY, *Nov.* 24, 1783.

Dear Sir,

THE many and great favors you have loaded us with during our long ſtay under your hoſpitable roof, prompted us to make you the earlieſt acknowledgments of our obligations, and beg you would receive our warmeſt thanks for ſuch unexpected, undeſerved tokens of your brotherly love; but the wanting to load our *only* frank has hindered them being more early traced upon paper, though they have been, are now, and (we truſt) ſhall ever be deeply engraven upon our hearts.—You have united for us the *Iriſh* hoſpitality, the *Engliſh* cordiality, and the *French* politeneſs. And now, ſir, what ſhall we ſay? You are our generous benefactors, and we your affectionate, though unprofitable ſervants. In one ſenſe, we are on a level with thoſe, to whom you ſhow your charity in the ſtreets, we can do nothing but pray for you, your dear partner, and *yours*. You have kindly received *us* for CHRIST's ſake, may GOD receive *you* freely for *his* ſake alſo! you have borne with our infirmities; the LORD bear with yours alſo! you have let your ſervants ſerve us; the LORD give alſo his *ſervants* and his *angels* charge concerning you, that your *hurt not your foot againſt*

a ſtone, and be helped out of every difficulty! you have given us a moſt comfortable reſting place, and pleaſing apartment under your own roof, next to your own chamber: LORD grant you eternal *reſt* with him in his heavenly manſions! nay, may HE himſelf be your *habitation* and *reſting* forever, and place you and yours with his own *jewels*, in the choiceſt repoſitory of precious things! you have fed us with the richeſt food! may the giver of every perfect gift, fit you for a place at his heavenly table; and may you rank there with *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*! you have given us moſt generous wines; may you drink with CHRIST himſelf, the fruit of the vine new in our father's kingdom! you gave us rich proviſions for the way; when you croſs the flood, the deep flood of death, may you find your heavenly LORD has made ſuch a rich proviſion of *faith*, *righteouſneſs*, *hope*, and *joy* for you, that you may rejoice, triumph and ſing; while you leave your earthly friends to go home, which (by the by) is more than we were enabled to do; for inſtead of *ſinging*, in our cabin, there was a very different melody. However we could ſoon, with joyful, thankful hearts, look back from the Briſtol to the Iriſh ſhore, and greet (in ſpirit) the dear friends we had left there: the LORD bleſs and increaſe them in ſpirituals, and (if beſt for them) in temporal goods alſo! the LORD crown them and theirs with loving kindneſs and mercies, equal to the *Love* of our GOD, and the *merit* of our SAVIOUR. And now, dear ſir, what ſhall I add? I cannot ſee even my bible, without the medium of your love*; and the token with which it alternately loads my pocket and my hand. I cannot even

* Alluding to a reading glaſs which this kind friend had preſented him with.

even ſeal a letter of thanks with a *good wafer*,‡ but I find a new call to repeat my thanks to you; I would begin again—but my ſcrap of paper is full, as well as my heart. We remain, dear ſir,

Your moſt affectionate and obliged
penſioners and ſervants,

JOHN and MARY FLETCHER.†

‡ This friend had alſo preſented him with a box of curious Iriſh wafers.

† After his marriage, I am informed, he always addreſſed his letters to his friends in the name of himſelf and Mrs. F——.

LETTER V.

To the Dublin Society of Methodiſts.

—— 1783.

TO all the dear brethren, who after kindly inviting John and Mary Fletcher, patiently bearing with them, and their infirmities, and entertaining them in the moſt hoſpitable chriſtian manner, have (to all theſe favors) added that of thanking them for their moſt pleaſant and profitable journey to Dublin.

Brethren and dearly beloved in the LORD, we had felt ſhame enough under the ſenſe of your kindneſs and patience towards *us*, and of our unprofita-

bleneſs towards *you*, when at Dublin, You needed not have added to our ſhame, by the new token of your love, the friendly letter, we have received from you. *We*, WE are indebted to *you*, dear brethren; *we* owed you the letter of thanks you have gratuitouſly ſent. But in all things you will have the preeminence; and we are glad to drink the cup of humility at your feet. May the LORD who can part a *ſea* by the touch of a rod, and could at firſt cauſe the earth to bring forth abundantly all manner of plants and trees without ſeed, ſo bleſs the ſeed of his *word*, which we ſowed in great weakneſs among you, as to make it produce a full crop of humble repentance, chearful faith, triumphant hope, and ſanctifying influence of GOD's ſpirit in your hearts, in all your families, in all your aſſemblies, and in your whole ſociety! If your profuſe liberality towards us abounded to the comfort of our poor brethren, we doubly rejoice on your account, and on theirs. When we ſee ſo many of your dear names, we rejoice in hope, that, as they fill and confirm an epiſtle dictated by overflowing love; ſo they fill the ſift of the *dear people*, whom our great HIGH PRIEST bears, not on his breaſt-plate as *Aaron* did, but on his *bleeding hands*, and his very *heart*, which is the everflowing and overflowing fountain of divine and brotherly LOVE. We cannot expreſs to you how dear all your names are to us, though we connot remember all your faces, we remember what will laſt longer than your features, your work, and labour, and repaſt of *love*, together with your prayers, ſighs, and groans; may that *ſeed* ſoon be watered by the REDEEMER's blood! and may the bleſſing of the FATHER of *Mercies* be upon it abundantly! we aſk it with tears, and gratitude and joy, while we (on our bended knees) ſpread your names, as you have kindly put them, and your wants, (ſo far as we remember them) before

before the Father of Mercies, and the *author* of every perfect gift. Let our worthless names ſtill find a place in your memory, when you remember your brethren diſtant in the fleſh, but near in the ſpirit; among ſuch ſtill vouchſafe to reckon,

Dear brethren,

Your very affectionate and truly obliged ſervants in CHRIST,

JOHN and MARY FLETCHER.

LETTER VI.

To a friend in Dublin.

Madely, Feb. 28. 1785.

My dear brother,

WE are all ſhadows. Your mortal parent hath paſſed away, and we do paſs away after him. Bleſſed be the *author* of every good gift for the ſhadow of his paternal care diſplayed in our deceaſed parents! what was good, loving, and lovely in them, is hid with CHRIST in GOD, where we may ſtill enjoy it implicitly, and where we *ſhall* explicitly enjoy it when he ſhall appear. A leſſon I learn daily is to ſee and enjoy things and perſons in their inviſible root, and in their eternal principle, where they are not ſubject to change, decay and death, but where

they bloſſom and ſhine in the primæval excellence allotted them by their gracious CREATOR. By this means, I learn to walk by faith, and not by ſight. But like a child, inſtead of walking by faith ſtraight and firmly in the good ſpiritual way, I am ſtill apt to cling here or there, which makes me cry, LORD let me ſee all things clearly, that I may never miſtake a ſhadow for the ſubſtance, nor put any creature (no not for a moment) in the place of the CREATOR, who deſerves to be loved and admired and ſought after with ALL the powers of the ſoul. Tracing his image in all the footſteps of nature, or looking for the divine ſignature in every creature, as we ſhould look for a king's image on an old ruſty medal, is true *Philoſophy*, and to find out that which is of GOD in ourſelves, is true *Theology*; genuine *Godlineſs*. I hope you will never be afraid or aſhamed of it. I ſee no danger in theſe ſtudies and meditations, provided we ſtill keep the end in view; the ALL of GOD and *ſhadowy* NOTHING of all that's viſible.

With reſpect to the great Pentecoſtal diſplay of the SPIRIT's GLORY, I ſtill look for it within and without; and to look for it aright, is the leſſon I learn. I am now led to be afraid of that in my nature, which would be for pomp, ſhow and viſible glory: I am afraid of falling by ſuch an expectation into what I call a ſpiritual judging; into a looking for CHRIST's coming in my own pompous conceit, which might make me reject him: if his *wiſdom* to crucify mine, choſe to come in a meaner way, and if inſtead of coming in his FATHER's glory, he choſe to come, *meek, riding*, not on the Cherubim, but as it were on the *foal of an aſs*. Our SAVIOUR ſaid with reſpect to his going to the feaſt, *my time is not yet come*, whether his time to come and turn the *thieves* and *buyers* out of the outward church is yet come; I know not: I doubt *Jeruſalem* and the *holy place* is yet given to

be

be trodden under foot of the Gentiles: but MY JERUSALEM! why is it not ſwallowed up of the glory of that which comes down from heaven, is a queſtion which I wait to ſolve by the teaching of the GREAT PROPHET, who is alone poſſeſſed of *Urim* and *Thummim*. The mighty power to wreſtle with him is all *divine*; and I often pray,

" That mighty faith on me beſtow,
Which cannot aſk in vain,
Which holds and will not let thee go,
Till I my ſuit obtain:
Till thou into my ſoul inſpire,
That perfect love unknown,
And tell my infinite deſire
Whate'er thou wilt be done."

In ſhort the LORD crucifies my wiſdom and my will every way, but I muſt be crucified as the *thieves*, *all my bones muſt be broken* for there is ſtill in me that impatience of wiſdom, which would ſtir, when the tempter ſays, *come down from the croſs*. It is not for us to know the times and ſeaſons, the manner and myſtical means of GOD's working, but only to hunger and thirſt, and lie paſſive before the great POTTER. In ſhort, I begin to be content to be a veſſel of clay, or of wood, ſo I be emptied of ſelf and filled with my GOD my ALL. Don't give up your confident hope, it ſaves ſtill ſurely, and it hath a preſent, and by and by it will have a great recompence of reward. I am glad, exceeding glad that your dear partner, goes on ſimply and believingly, ſuch a companion is a great bleſſing if you know how to make uſe of it. For when two of you ſhall agree touching one thing in prayer, it ſhall be done.* My wife and I endeavour to fathom the meaning of that deep *promiſe:*

* Matt. 18, 19.

wise: join your line with ours, and let us search, what? after all exceeding knowledge, viz. the *wisdom*, and the *power*, the *love* and *faithfulness* of GOD. My wife and I embrace you both, and pray you would help one another, and us by your prayers, *adieu!*—be GOD's, as the French say, and see GOD *yours* in CHRIST, for you, for brother D——, Mrs. B——, &c. &c.

Your obliged friends,

JOHN and MARY FLETCHER.

F I N I S.